

Toy Fair Is Facing Challenges

On its sparkly, fun-loving surface, at least, all is well and business is booming at the American International Toy Fair, which opens today in Manhattan. The venerable trade show, with its festival of news releases and celebrity-party invitations, has signed up more exhibitors this year, 1,640, than last year to hawk their Barbies and Power Rangers and Matchbox Lamborghinis.

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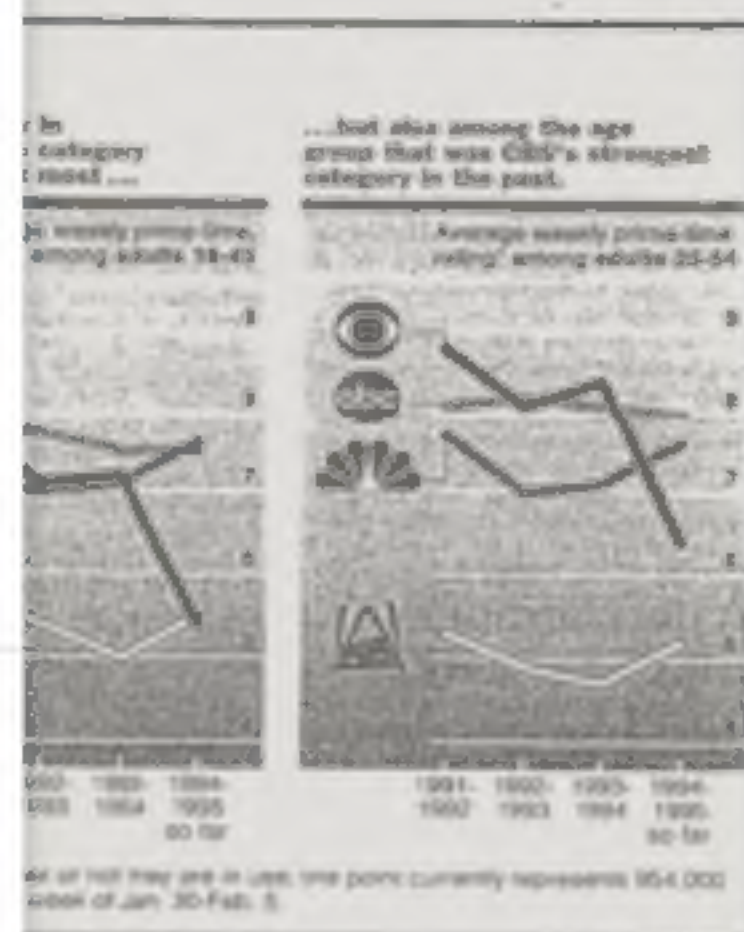
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Sinks in Ratings

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for Orange County

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the World Bank



Toy Fair Is Facing Challenges

Javits Center's Costs And Rival Are Cited

By GLENN COLLINS

On its sparkly, fun-loving surface, at least, all is well and business is booming at the American International Toy Fair, which opens today in Manhattan.

The venerable trade show, with its festival of news releases and celebrity-party invitations, has signed up more exhibitors this year, 1,640, than last year to hawk their Barbies and Power Rangers and Matchbox Lamborghinis.

Indeed, in its first year in Manhattan, the toy fair is expecting 30,000 buyers from 26 countries, just as many as last year. And its exhibition space in the Jacob K. Javits Center was booked solid by November, with a waiting list of 300.

Yet today, as fairgoers — the public is not invited — jam the famously overcrowded elevators in the Toy Center at Fifth Avenue and 23d Street before heading to exhibits in the Javits Center later this week, the toy fair is facing worrisome new challenges. Industry executives and experts say the New York toy fair is in danger of losing its edge and influence sharply reduced in the future.

One problem, they say, is the relatively small size and high costs of the Javits Center, compared with show halls in other cities. An even bigger problem, they agree, is the fundamental evolution in retailing patterns in the \$15 billion United States toy industry — where many toy orders are placed well before the toy fair offers itself as a showcase. This trend may have already discouraged the participation of Hasbro, America's second-largest toy company after Mattel Inc.

"The potential is that we may not show in New York next year," said Wayne Charney, a spokesman for Hasbro, which has three showrooms in and near the Manhattan Toy Center. "The publicity and high profile may not be enough for the expense."

He said the company, which was surpassed by Mattel in sales last year, for the first time since 1985, would "save in the millions" if it left the toy center. "Toy Fair is becoming less important, except as a showcase, because by this time the major retailers, and even nonmajors, have already had two or three looks at our line," he said.

Yet another challenge comes from the little-noted but fast expansion of an upstart, the Dallas International Toy Import Show held in the Dallas Market Center in January. That show has the potential to siphon off

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Price Rises By Factories On Increase

By LOUIS UCHITELLE

Specialized The New York Times

Blockbuster

By GERALDINE FARRINGTON

Steven R. Bennett, president of the Blockbuster Entertainment Corporation, a division of Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., said yesterday that Mr. Bennett was investigating the possibility of a lawsuit against Blockbuster.

The two sides stem from a film partnership formed by Blockbuster, chairman and chief executive of Blockbuster Entertainment Inc., in 1993. Mr. Bennett, who said that the partnership was "a success," said that the partnership was "a success."

When Mr. Bennett said the partnership was "a success," he said that the partnership was "a success."

Japanese Will

By ANDREW POLLACK

TOKYO Feb. 13 — The Prime Minister's Office said today that the United States government had agreed to a proposed computer company with Apple Computer's Macintosh industry officials said on Friday.

Stocks Higher in Japan

TOKYO, Monday, Feb. 13 (AP) — Stocks were slightly higher today. The Nikkei index of stocks was up 2.51 points, or 0.01 percent, at 12,111.88. On Friday, Nikkei rose 119.61 points.

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